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# AN INQUIRY

INTO SOME OF

THE CONDITIONS AT PRESENT AFFECTING

“THE STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE”

IN OUR SCHOOLS.

BY JOHN RUSKIN.

Read at the Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects,  
May 15th, 1865.



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## THE STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE.

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I SUPPOSE there is no man who, permitted to address, for the first time, the Institute of British Architects, would not feel himself abashed and restrained, doubtful of his claim to be heard by them, even if he attempted only to describe what had come under his personal observation, much more if on the occasion he thought it would be expected of him to touch upon any of the general principles of the art of architecture before its principal English masters.

But if any more than another should feel thus abashed, it is certainly one who has first to ask their pardon for the petulance of boyish expressions of partial thought; for ungraceful advocacy of principles which needed no support from him, and discourteous blame of work of which he had never felt the difficulty.

Yet, when I ask this pardon, gentlemen—and I do it sincerely and in shame—it is not as desiring to retract anything in the general tenor and scope of what I have hitherto tried

to say. Permit me the pain, and the apparent impertinence, of speaking for a moment of my own past work; for it is necessary that what I am about to submit to you to-night should be spoken in no disadvantageous connexion with that; and yet understood as spoken in no discordance of purpose with that. Indeed, there is much in old work of mine which I could wish to put out of mind. Reasonings, perhaps not in themselves false, but founded on insufficient data and imperfect experience—eager preferences, and dislikes, dependent on chance circumstances of association, and limitations of sphere of labour: but, while I would fain now, if I could, modify the applications, and chasten the extravagance of my writings, let me also say of them that they were the expression of a delight in the art of architecture which was too intense to be vitally deceived, and of an inquiry too honest and eager to be without some useful result; and I only wish I had now time, and strength, and power of mind, to carry on, more worthily, the main endeavour of my early work. That main endeavour has been throughout to set forth the life of the individual human spirit as modifying the application of the formal laws of architecture, no less than of all other arts; and to show that the power and advance of this art, even in conditions of formal nobleness, were dependent on its just association with sculpture as a means of expressing the beauty of natural forms: and I the more boldly ask your

permission to insist somewhat on this main meaning of my past work, because there are many buildings now rising in the streets of London, as in other cities of England, which appear to be designed in accordance with this principle, and which are, I believe, more offensive to all who thoughtfully concur with me in accepting the principle of Naturalism than they are to the classical architect to whose modes of design they are visibly antagonistic. These buildings, in which the mere cast of a flower, or the realization of a vulgar face, carved without pleasure by a workman who is only endeavouring to attract attention by novelty, and then fastened on, or appearing to be fastened, as chance may dictate, to an arch, or a pillar, or a wall, hold such relation to nobly naturalistic architecture as common sign-painter's furniture landscapes do to painting, or commonest wax-work to Greek sculpture; and the feelings with which true naturalists regard such buildings of this class are, as nearly as might be, what a painter would experience, if, having contended earnestly against conventional schools, and having asserted that the Greek vase-painting, and Egyptian wall-painting, and Mediæval glass-painting, though beautiful, all, in their place and way, were yet subordinate arts, and culminated only in perfectly naturalistic work such as Raphael's in fresco, and Titian's on canvas;—if, I say, a painter, fixed in such faith in an entire, intellectual, and manly truth, and maintaining

that an Egyptian profile of a head, however decoratively applicable, was only noble for such human truth as it contained, and was imperfect and ignoble beside a work of Titian's, were shown, by his antagonist, the colored daguerreotype of a human body in its nakedness, and told that it was art such as that which he really advocated, and to such art that his principles, if carried out, would finally lead.

And because this question lies at the very root of the organization of the system of instruction for our youth, I venture boldly to express the surprise and regret with which I see our schools still agitated by assertions of the opposition of Naturalism to Invention, and to the higher conditions of art. Even in this very room I believe there has lately been question whether a sculptor should look at a real living creature of which he had to carve the image. I would answer in one sense,—no; that is to say, he ought to carve no living creature while he still needs to look at it. If we do not know what a human body is like, we certainly had better look, and look often, at it, before we carve it; but if we already know the human likeness so well that we can carve it by light of memory, we shall not need to ask whether we ought now to look at it or not; and what is true of man is true of all other creatures and organisms—of bird, and beast, and leaf. No assertion is more at variance with the laws of classical as well as of subsequent art than the com-

mon one that species should not be distinguished in great design. We might as well say that we ought to carve a man so as not to know him from an ape, as that we should carve a lily so as not to know it from a thistle. It is difficult for me to conceive how this can be asserted in the presence of any remains either of great Greek or Italian art. A Greek looked at a cockle-shell or a cuttle-fish as carefully as he looked at an Olympic conqueror. The eagle of Elis, the lion of Velia, the horse of Syracuse, the bull of Thurii, the dolphin of Tarentum, the crab of Agrigentum, and the crawfish of Catana, are studied as closely, every one of them, as the Juno of Argos, or Apollo of Clazomenae. Idealism, so far from being contrary to special truth, is the very abstraction of specialty from everything else. It is the earnest statement of the characters which make man man, and cockle cockle, and flesh flesh, and fish fish. Feeble thinkers indeed, always suppose that distinction of kind involves meanness of style ; but the meanness is in the treatment, not in the distinction. There is a noble way of carving a man, and a mean one ; and there is a noble way of carving a beetle, and a mean one ; and a great sculptor carves his scarabæus grandly, as he carves his king, while a mean sculptor makes vermin of both. And it is a sorrowful truth, yet a sublime one, that this greatness of treatment cannot be taught by talking about it. No, nor even by enforced imi-

tative practice of it. Men treat their subjects nobly only when they themselves become noble; not till then. And that elevation of their own nature is assuredly not to be effected by a course of drawing from models, however well chosen, or of listening to lectures, however well intended.

Art, national or individual, is the result of a long course of previous life and training; a necessary result, if that life has been loyal, and an impossible one, if it has been base. Let a nation be healthful, happy, pure in its enjoyments, brave in its acts, and broad in its affections, and its art will spring round and within it as freely as the foam from a fountain; but let the springs of its life be impure, and its course polluted, and you will not get the bright spray by treatises on the mathematical structure of bubbles.

And I am to-night the more restrained in addressing you, because, gentlemen—I tell you honestly—I am weary of all writing and speaking about art, and most of my own. No good is to be reached that way. The last fifty years have, in every civilized country of Europe, produced more brilliant thought, and more subtle reasoning about art, than the five thousand before them; and what has it all come to? Do not let it be thought that I am insensible to the high merits of much of our modern work. It cannot be for a moment supposed that in speaking of the inefficient expression of the doctrines which writers on art have tried to enforce, I was

thinking of such Gothic as has been designed and built by Mr. Scott, Mr. Butterfield, Mr. Street, Mr. Waterhouse, Mr. Godwin, or my dead friend, Mr. Woodward. Their work has been original and independent. So far as it is good, it has been founded on principles learned not from books, but by study of the monuments of the great schools, developed by national grandeur, not by philosophical speculation. But I am entirely assured that those who have done best among us are the least satisfied with what they have done, and will admit a sorrowful concurrence in my belief that the spirit, or rather, I should say, the dispirit, of the age, is heavily against them; that all the ingenious writing or thinking which is so rife amongst us has failed to educate a public capable of taking true pleasure in any kind of art, and that the best designers never satisfy their own requirements of themselves, unless by vainly addressing another temper of mind, and providing for another manner of life, than ours. All lovely architecture was designed for cities in cloudless air; for cities in which piazzas and gardens opened in bright populousness and peace; cities built that men might live happily in them, and take delight daily in each other's presence and powers. But our cities, built in black air, which, by its accumulated foulness, first renders all ornament invisible in distance, and then chokes its interstices with soot; cities which are mere crowded masses of store, and ware-

house, and counter, and are therefore to the rest of the world what the larder and cellar are to a private house; cities in which the object of men is not life, but labour; and in which all chief magnitude of edifice is to enclose machinery; cities in which the streets are not the avenues for the passing and procession of a happy people, but the drains for the discharge of a tormented mob, in which the only object in reaching any spot is to be transferred to another; in which existence becomes mere transition, and every creature is only one atom in a drift of human dust, and current of interchanging particles, circulating here by tunnels under ground, and there by tubes in the air; for a city, or cities, such as this, no architecture is possible—nay, no desire of it is possible to their inhabitants.

One of the most singular proofs of the vanity of all hope that conditions of art may be combined with the occupations of such a city, has been given lately in the design of the new iron bridge over the Thames at Blackfriars. Distinct attempt has been there made to obtain architectural effect on a grand scale. Nor was there anything in the nature of the work to prevent such an effort being successful. It is not an edifice's being of iron, or of glass, or thrown into new forms, demanded by new purposes, which need hinder its being beautiful. But it is the absence of all desire of beauty, of all joy in fancy, and of all freedom in thought. If a Greek,



or Egyptian, or Gothic architect had been required to design such a bridge, he would have looked instantly at the main conditions of its structure, and dwelt on them with the delight of imagination. He would have seen that the main thing to be done was to hold a horizontal group of iron rods steadily and straight over stone piers. Then he would have said to himself (or felt without saying), "It is this holding,—this grasp,—this securing tenor of a thing which might be shaken, so that it cannot be shaken, on which I have to insist." And he would have put some life into those iron tenons. As a Greek put human life into his pillars and produced the caryatid; and an Egyptian lotus life into his pillars, and produced the lily capital: so here, either of them would have put some gigantic or some angelic life into those colossal sockets. He would perhaps have put vast winged statues of bronze, folding their wings, and grasping the iron rails with their hands; or monstrous eagles, or serpents holding with claw or coil, or strong four-footed animals couchant, holding with the paw, or in fierce action, holding with teeth. Thousands of grotesque or of lovely thoughts would have risen before him, and the bronze forms, animal or human, would have signified, either in symbol or in legend, whatever might be gracefully told respecting the purposes of the work and the districts to which it conducted. Whereas, now, the entire invention of the designer seems to have

exhausted itself in exaggerating to an enormous size a weak form of iron nut, and in conveying the information upon it, in large letters, that it belongs to the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway Company. I believe then, gentlemen, that if there were any life in the national mind in such respects, it would be shown in these its most energetic and costly works. But that there is no such life, nothing but a galvanic restlessness and covetousness, with which it is for the present vain to strive; and in the midst of which, tormented at once by its activities and its apathies, having their work continually thrust aside and dishonoured, always seen to disadvantage, and overtopped by huge masses, discordant and destructive, even the best architects must be unable to do justice to their own powers.

But, gentlemen, while thus the mechanisms of the age prevent even the wisest and best of its artists from producing entirely good work, may we not reflect with consternation what a marvellous ability the luxury of the age, and the very advantages of education, confer on the unwise and ignoble for the production of attractively and infectiously *bad* work. I do not think that this adverse influence, necessarily affecting all conditions of so-called civilization, has been ever enough considered. It is impossible to calculate the power of the false workman in an advanced period of national life, nor the temptation to all workmen to *become* false.

First, there is the irresistible appeal to vanity. There is hardly any temptation of the kind (there cannot be) while the arts are in progress. The best men must then always be ashamed of themselves; they never can be satisfied with their work absolutely, but only as it is progressive. Take, for instance, any archaic head intended to be beautiful; say, the Attic Athena, on the early Arethusa of Syracuse. In that, and in all archaic work of promise, there is much that is inefficient, much that to us appears ridiculous—but nothing sensual, nothing vain, nothing spurious or imitative. It is a child's work, a childish nation's work, but not a fool's work. You find in children the same tolerance of ugliness, the same eager and innocent delight in their own work for the moment, however feeble; but next day it is thrown aside, and something better is done. Now, in this careless play, a child or a childish nation differs inherently from a foolish educated person, or a nation advanced in pseudo-civilization. The educated person has seen all kinds of beautiful things, of which he would fain do the like—not to add to their number—but for his own vanity, that he also may be called an artist. Here is at once a singular and fatal difference. The childish nation sees nothing in its own past work to satisfy itself. It is pleased at having done this, but wants something better; it is struggling forward always to reach this better, this ideal conception. It wants more beauty to look at, it

wants more subject to feel. It calls out to all its artists—stretching its hands to them as a little child does—“Oh, if you would but tell me another story,”—“Oh, if I might but have a doll with bluer eyes.” That’s the right temper to work in, and to get work done for you in. But the vain, aged, highly-educated nation is satiated with beautiful things—it has myriads more than it can look at; it has fallen into a habit of inattention; it passes weary and jaded through galleries which contain the best fruit of a thousand years of human travail; it gapes and shrugs over them, and pushes its way past them to the door. But there is one feeling that is always distinct; however jaded and languid we may be in all other pleasures, we are never languid in vanity, and we would still paint and carve for fame. What other motive have the nations of Europe to-day? If they wanted art for art’s sake, they would take care of what they have already got. But at this instant the two noblest pictures in Venice are lying rolled up in out-houses, and the noblest portrait of Titian in existence is hung forty feet from the ground. We have absolutely no motive but vanity and the love of money—no others, as nations, than these, whatever we may have as individuals. And as the thirst of vanity thus increases, so the temptation to it. There was no fame of artists in these archaic days. Every year, every hour, saw some one rise to surpass what had been done before. And there was always

better work to be done, but never any credit to be got by it. The artist lived in an atmosphere of perpetual, wholesome, inevitable eclipse. Do as well as you choose to-day,—make the whole Borgo dance with delight, they would dance to a better man's pipe to-morrow. *Credette Cimabue nella pittura, tener lo campo, et ora ha Giotto il grido.* This was the fate, the necessary fate, even of the strongest. They could only hope to be remembered as links in an endless chain. For the weaker men it was no use even to put their name on their works. They did not. If they could not work for joy and for love, and take their part simply in the choir of human toil, they might throw up their tools. But now it is far otherwise—now, the best having been done—and for a couple of hundred years, the best of us being confessed to have come short of it, everybody thinks that he may be the great man once again; and this is certain, that whatever in art is done for display, is invariably wrong.

But, secondly, consider the attractive power of false art, completed, as compared with imperfect art advancing to completion. Archaic work, so far as faultful, is repulsive; but advanced work is, in all its faults, attractive. The moment that art has reached the point at which it becomes sensitively and delicately imitative, it appeals to a new audience. From that instant it addresses the sensualist and the idler. Its deceptions, its successes, its subtleties, become

interesting to every condition of folly, of frivolity, and of vice. And this new audience brings to bear upon the art in which its foolish and wicked interest has been unhappily awakened, the full power of its riches: the largest bribes of gold as well as of praise are offered to the artist who will betray his art, until at last, from the sculpture of Phidias and fresco of Luini, it sinks into the cabinet ivory and the picture kept under lock and key. Between these highest and lowest types, there is a vast mass of merely imitative and delicately sensual sculpture; veiled nymphs—chained slaves—soft goddesses seen by rose-light through suspended curtains—drawing-room portraits and domesticities, and such like, in which the interest is either merely personal and selfish, or dramatic and sensational; in either case, destructive of the power of the public to sympathize with the aims of great architects.

Gentlemen, I am no Puritan, and have never praised or advocated Puritanical art. The two pictures which I would last part with out of our National Gallery, if there were question of parting with any, would be Titian's Bacchus and Correggio's Venus. But the noble naturalism of these was the fruit of ages of previous courage, continence, and religion—it was the fulness of passion in the life of a Britomart. But the mid age and old age of nations is not like the mid age or old age of noble women. National decrepitude must be criminal. National death can only be by disease, and yet it

is almost impossible, out of the history of the art of nations, to elicit the true conditions relating to its decline in any demonstrable manner. The history of Italian art is that of a struggle between superstition and naturalism on one side, between continence and sensuality on another. So far as naturalism prevailed over superstition, there is always progress; so far as sensuality over chastity, death. And the two contests are simultaneous. It is impossible to distinguish one victory from the other. Observe, however, I say victory over superstition, not over religion. Let me carefully define the difference. Superstition, in all times and among all nations, is the fear of a spirit whose passions are those of a man, whose acts are the acts of a man; who is present in some places, not in others; who makes some places holy, and not others; who is kind to one person, unkind to another; who is pleased or angry according to the degree of attention you pay to him, or praise you refuse to him; who is hostile generally to human pleasure, but may be bribed by sacrifice of a part of that pleasure into permitting the rest. This, whatever form of faith it colours, is the essence of superstition. And religion is the belief in a Spirit whose mercies are over all His works—who is kind even to the unthankful and the evil; who is everywhere present, and therefore is in no place to be sought, and in no place to be evaded; to whom all creatures, times, and things are everlastingly holy, and who

claims—not tithes of wealth, nor sevenths of days—but all the wealth that we have, and all the days that we live, and all the beings that we are, but who claims that totality because He delights only in the delight of His creatures; and because, therefore, the one duty that they owe to Him, and the only service they can render Him, is to be happy. A Spirit, therefore, whose eternal benevolence cannot be angered, cannot be appeased; whose laws are everlasting and inexorable, so that heaven and earth must indeed pass away if one jot of them failed: laws which attach to every wrong and error a measured, inevitable penalty; to every rightness and prudence, an assured reward; penalty, of which the remittance cannot be purchased; and reward, of which the promise cannot be broken.

And thus, in the history of art, we ought continually to endeavour to distinguish (while, except in broadest lights, it is impossible to distinguish) the work of religion from that of superstition, and the work of reason from that of infidelity. Religion devotes the artist, hand and mind, to the service of the gods; superstition makes him the slave of ecclesiastical pride, or forbids his work altogether, in terror or disdain. Religion perfects the form of the divine statue; superstition distorts it into ghastly grotesque. Religion contemplates the gods as the lords of healing and life, surrounds them with glory of affectionate service, and festivity of pure human



beauty. Superstition contemplates its idols as lords of death, appeases them with blood, and vows itself to them in torture and solitude. Religion proselytizes by love, superstition by war; religion teaches by example, superstition by persecution. Religion gave granite shrine to the Egyptian, golden temple to the Jew, sculptured corridor to the Greek, pillared aisle and frescoed wall to the Christian. Superstition made idols of the splendours by which religion had spoken: revered pictures and stones, instead of truths; letters and laws instead of acts; and for ever, in various madness of fantastic desolation, kneels in the temple while it crucifies the Christ.

On the other hand, to reason resisting superstition, we owe the entire compass of modern energies and sciences: the healthy laws of life, and the possibilities of future progress. But to infidelity resisting religion (or which is often enough the case, taking the mask of it), we owe sensuality, cruelty and war, insolence and avarice, modern political economy, life by conservation of forces, and salvation by every man's looking after his own interests; and generally, whatsoever of guilt, and folly, and death, there is abroad among us. And of the two, a thousand-fold rather let us retain some colour of superstition, so that we may keep also some strength of religion, than comfort ourselves with colour of reason for the desolation of godlessness. I would say to every youth who entered our schools—be a Mahometan, a

Diana-worshipper, a Fire-worshipper, Root-worshipper, if you will; but at least be so much a man as to know what worship means. I had rather, a million-fold rather, see you one of those "*quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis numina*," than one of those *quibus hæc non nascuntur in cordibus lumina*; and who are, by everlasting orphanage, divided from the Father of Spirits, who is also the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift.

"So much of man," I say, feeling profoundly that all right exercise of any human gift, so descended from the Giver of good, depends on the primary formation of the character of true manliness in the youth,—that is to say, of a majestic, grave, and deliberate strength. How strange the words sound; how little does it seem possible to conceive of majesty, and gravity, and deliberation in the daily track of modern life. Yet, gentlemen, we need not hope that our work will be majestic if there is no majesty in ourselves. The word "manly" has come to mean practically, among us, a schoolboy's character, not a man's. We are, at our best, thoughtlessly impetuous, fond of adventure and excitement; curious in knowledge for its novelty, not for its system and results; faithful and affectionate to those among whom we are by chance cast, but gently and calmly insolent to strangers; we are stupidly conscientious, and instinctively brave, and always ready to cast away the lives we take no pains to

make valuable, in causes of which we have never ascertained the justice. This is our highest type—notable peculiarly among nations for its gentleness, together with its courage; but in lower conditions it is especially liable to degradation by its love of jest and of vulgar sensation. It is against this fatal tendency to vile play that we have chiefly to contend. It is the spirit of Milton's Comus; bestial itself, but having power to arrest and paralyze all who come within its influence, even pure creatures sitting helpless, mocked by it on their marble thrones. It is incompatible, not only with all greatness of character, but with all true gladness of heart, and it develops itself in nations in proportion to their degradation, connected with a peculiar gloom and a singular tendency to play with death, which is a morbid reaction from the morbid excess.

A book has lately been published on the Mythology of the Rhine, with illustrations by Gustave Doré. The Rhine god is represented in the vignette title-page with a pipe in one hand and a pot of beer in the other. You cannot have a more complete type of the tendency which is chiefly to be dreaded in this age than in this conception, as opposed to any possibility of representation of a river-god, however playful, in the mind of a Greek painter. The example is the more notable because Gustave Doré's is not a common mind, and, if born in any other epoch, he would probably have

done valuable (though never first-rate) work; but by glancing (it will be impossible for you to do more than glance) at his illustrations of Balzac's "Contes Drolatiques," you will see further how this "drolatique," or semi-comic mask, is, in the truth of it, the mask of a skull, and how the tendency to burlesque jest is both in France and England only an effervescence from the *cloaca maxima* of the putrid instincts which fasten themselves on national sin, and are in the midst of the luxury of European capitals, what Dante meant when he wrote, *quel mi sveglia col puzzo*, of the body of the Wealth-Siren; the mocking levity and mocking gloom being equally signs of the death of the soul; just as, contrariwise, a passionate seriousness and passionate joyfulness are signs of its full life in works such as those of Angelico, Luini, Ghiberti, or La Robbia.

It is to recover this stern seriousness, this pure and thrilling joy, together with perpetual sense and spiritual presence, that all true education of youth must now be directed. This seriousness, this passion, this universal human religion, are the first principles, the true roots of all art, as they are of all doing, of all being. Get this *vis viva* first and all great work will follow. Lose it, and your schools of art will stand among other living schools as the frozen corpses stand by the winding stair of the St. Michael's Convent of Mont Cenis, holding their hands stretched out under their shrouds, as if

beseeching the passer-by to look upon the wasting of their death.

And all the higher branches of technical teaching are vain without this; nay, are in some sort vain altogether, for they are superseded by this. You may teach imitation, because the meanest man can imitate; but you can neither teach idealism nor composition, because only a great man can choose, conceive, or compose; and he does all these necessarily, and because of his nature. His greatness is in his choice of things, in his analysis of them; and his combining powers involve the totality of his knowledge in life. His methods of observation and abstraction are essential habits of his thought, conditions of his being. If he looks at a human form he recognises the signs of nobility in it, and loves them—hates whatever is diseased, frightful, sinful, or *designant* of decay. All ugliness, and abortion, and fading away; all signs of vice and foulness, he turns away from, as inherently diabolic and horrible; all signs of unconquered emotion he regrets, as weaknesses. He looks only for the calm purity of the human creature, in living conquest of its passions and of fate.

That is idealism; but you cannot teach any one else that preference. Take a man who likes to see and paint the gambler's rage; the hedge-ruffian's enjoyment; the debauched soldier's strife; the vicious woman's degradation;—take a

man fed on the dusky picturesque of rags and guilt; talk to him of principles of beauty! make him draw what you will, how you will, he will leave the stain of himself on whatever he touches. You had better go lecture to a snail, and tell it to leave no slime behind it. Try to make a mean man compose; you will find nothing in his thoughts consecutive or proportioned—nothing consistent in his sight—nothing in his fancy. He cannot comprehend two things in relation at once—how much less twenty! How much less all! Everything is uppermost with him in its turn, and each as large as the rest; but Titian or Veronese compose as tranquilly as they would speak—inevitably. The thing comes to them so—they see it so—rightly, and in harmony: they will not talk to you of composition, hardly even understanding how lower people see things otherwise, but knowing that if they *do* see otherwise, there is for them the end there, talk as you will.

I had intended, in conclusion, gentlemen, to incur such blame of presumption as might be involved in offering some hints for present practical methods in architectural schools, but here again I am checked, as I have been throughout, by a sense of the uselessness of all minor means and helps, without the establishment of a true and broad educational system. My wish would be to see the profession of the architect united, not with that of the engineer, but of the sculptor. I think there should be a separate school and university

course for engineers, in which the principal branches of study connected with that of practical building should be the physical and exact sciences, and honours should be taken in mathematics; but I think there should be another school and university course for the sculptor and architect in which literature and philosophy should be the associated branches of study, and honours should be taken *in literis humanioribus*, and I think a young architect's examination for his degree (for mere pass), should be much stricter than that of youths intending to enter other professions. The quantity of scholarship necessary for the efficiency of a country clergyman is not great. So that he be modest and kindly, the main truths he has to teach may be learned better in his heart than in books, and taught in very simple English. The best physicians I have known spent very little time in their libraries; and though my lawyer sometimes chats with me over a Greek coin, I think he regards the time so spent in the light rather of concession to my idleness than as helpful to his professional labours.

But there is no task undertaken by a true architect of which the honourable fulfilment will not require a range of knowledge and habitual feeling only attainable by advanced scholarship.

Since, however, such expansion of system is, at present, beyond hope, the best we can do is to render the studies

undertaken in our schools thoughtful, reverent, and refined, according to our power. Especially it should be our aim to prevent the minds of the students from being distracted by models of an unworthy or mixed character. A museum is one thing—a school another; and I am persuaded that as the efficiency of a school of literature depends on the mastering a few good books, so the efficiency of a school of art will depend on the understanding a few good models. And so strongly do I feel this that I would, for my own part, at once consent to sacrifice my personal predilections in art, and to vote for the exclusion of all Gothic or Mediæval models whatsoever, if by this sacrifice I could obtain also the exclusion of Byzantine, Indian, Renaissance-French, and other more or less attractive but barbarous work; and thus concentrate the mind of the student wholly upon the study of natural form, and upon its treatment by the sculptors and metal workers of Greece, Ionia, Sicily, and Magna Græcia, between 500 and 350 B.C., but I should hope that exclusiveness need not be carried quite so far.

I think Donatello, Mino of Fiesole, the Robbias, Ghiberti, Verrocchio, and Michael Angelo, should be adequately represented in our schools—together with the Greeks—and that a few carefully chosen examples of the floral sculpture of the North in the thirteenth century should be added, with especial view to display the treatment of naturalistic ornament in

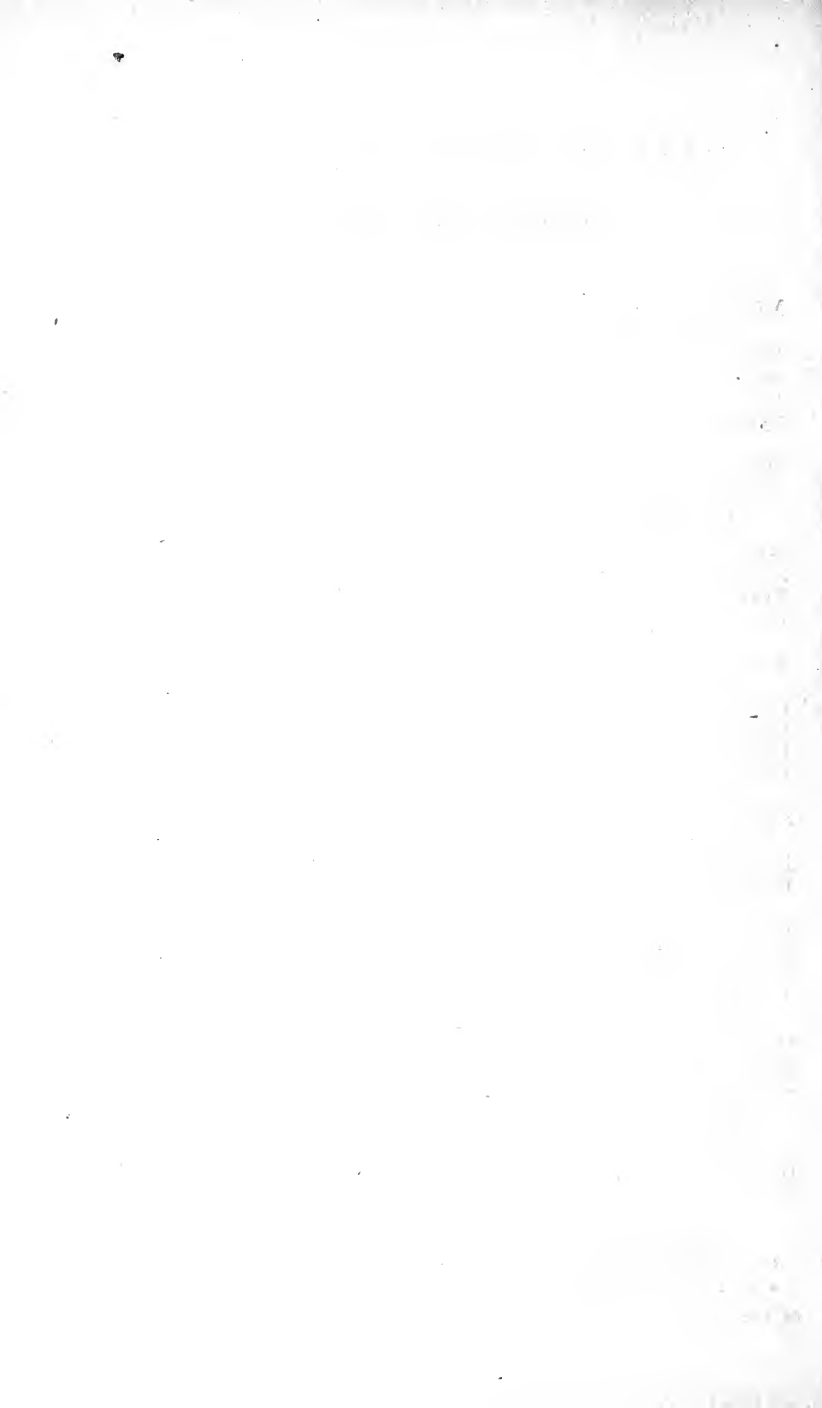


subtle connexion with constructive requirements ; and in the course of study pursued with reference to these models, as of admitted perfection, I should endeavour first to make the student thoroughly acquainted with the natural forms and characters of the objects he had to treat, and then to exercise him in the abstraction of these forms, and the suggestion of these characters, under due sculptural limitation. He should first be taught to draw largely and simply ; then he should make quick and firm sketches of flowers, animals, drapery, and figures, from nature, in the simplest terms of line, and light, and shade ; always being taught to look at the organic actions and masses, not at the textures or accidental effects of shade ; meantime his sentiment respecting all these things should be cultivated by close and constant inquiry into their mythological significance and associated traditions ; then, knowing the things and creatures thoroughly, and regarding them through an atmosphere of enchanted memory, he should be shown how the facts he has taken so long to learn are summed up by a great sculptor in a few touches : how those touches are invariably arranged in musical and decorative relations ; how every detail unnecessary for his purpose is refused ; how those necessary for his purpose are insisted upon, or even exaggerated, or represented by singular artifice, when literal representation is impossible ; and how all this is done under the instinct and passion of an inner com-

manding spirit which it is indeed impossible to imitate, but possible, perhaps, to share.

Perhaps! Pardon me that I speak despondingly. For my own part, I feel the force of mechanism and the fury of avaricious commerce to be at present so irresistible, that I have seceded from the study not only of architecture, but nearly of all art; and have given myself, as I would in a besieged city, to seek the best modes of getting bread and water for its multitudes, there remaining no question, it seems to me, of other than such grave business for the time. But there is, at least, this ground for courage, if not for hope: As the evil spirits of avarice and luxury are directly contrary to art, so, also, art is directly contrary to them; and according to its force expulsive of them and medicinal against them; so that the establishment of such schools as I have ventured to describe—whatever their immediate success or ill-success in the teaching of art—would yet be the directest method of resistance to those conditions of evil among which our youth are cast at the most critical period of their lives. We may not be able to produce architecture, but, at the least, we shall resist vice. I do not know if it has been observed that while Dante rightly connects architecture, as the most permanent expression of the pride of humanity, whether just or unjust, with the first cornice of Purgatory, he indicates its noble function by engraving upon

it, in perfect sculpture, the stories which rebuke the errors and purify the purposes of noblest souls. In the fulfilment of such function, literally and practically, here among men, is the only real use or pride of noble architecture, and on its acceptance or surrender of that function it depends whether, in future, the cities of England melt into a ruin more confused and ghastly than ever storm wasted or wolf inhabited, or purge and exalt themselves into true habitations of men, whose walls shall be Safety, and whose gates shall be Praise.



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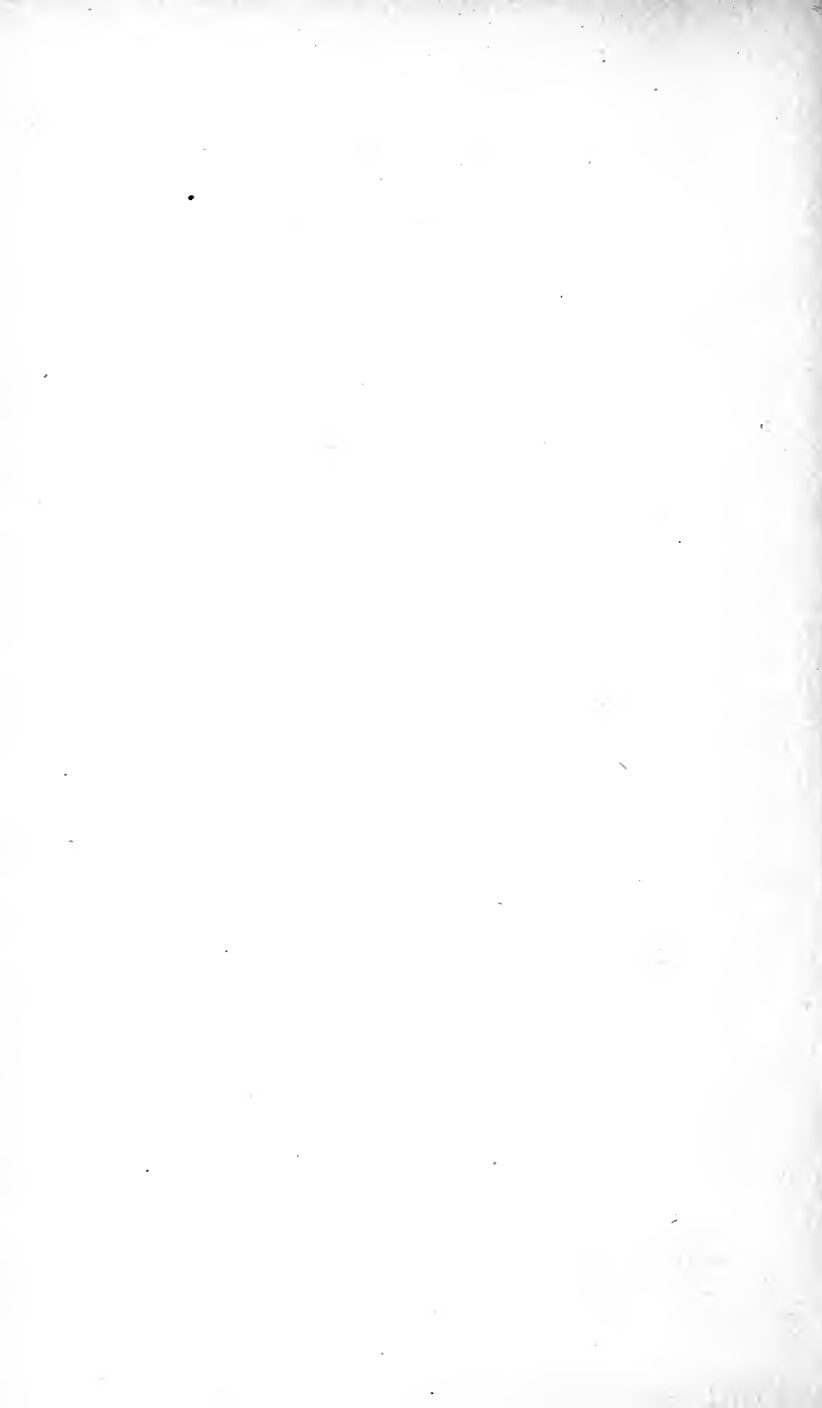
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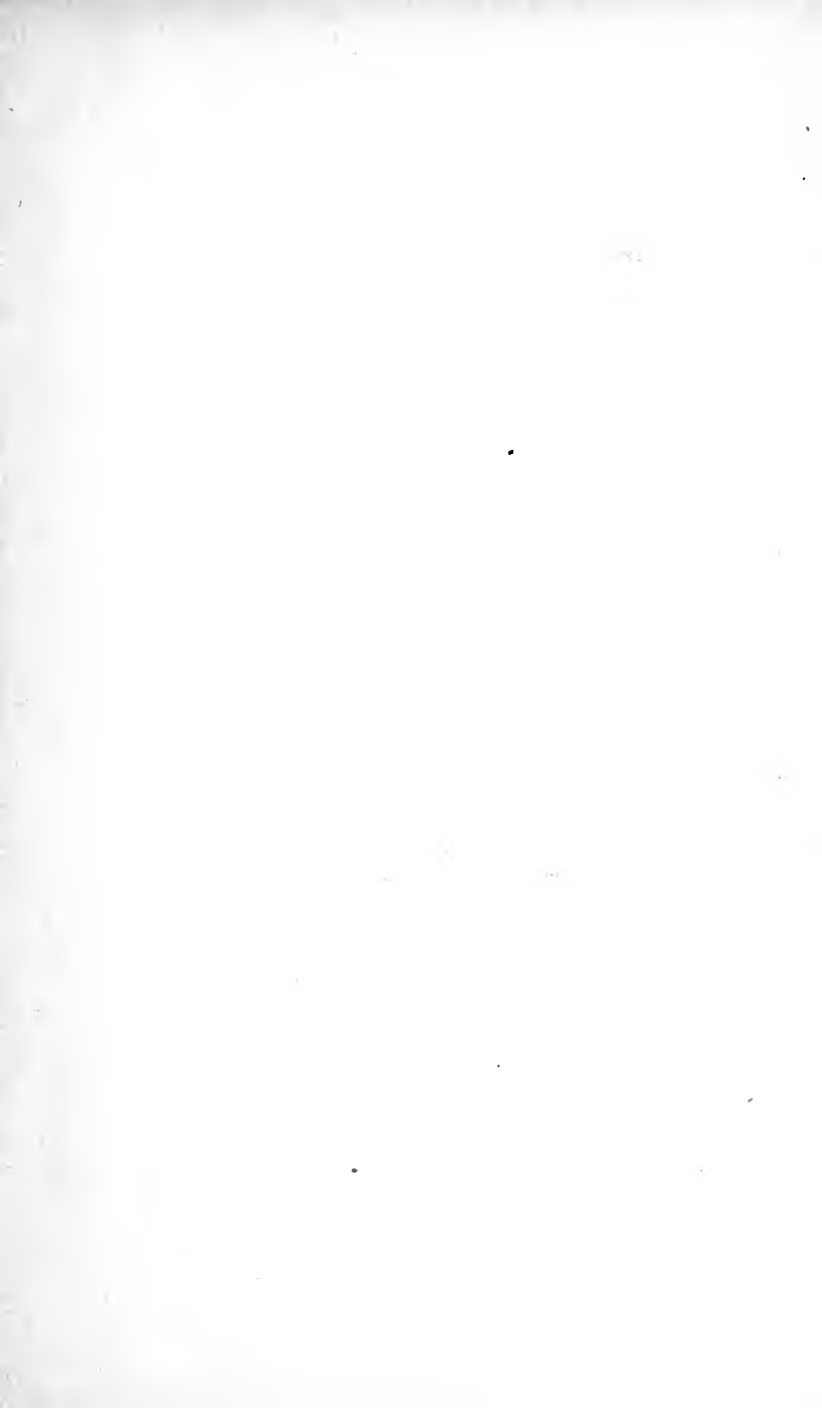
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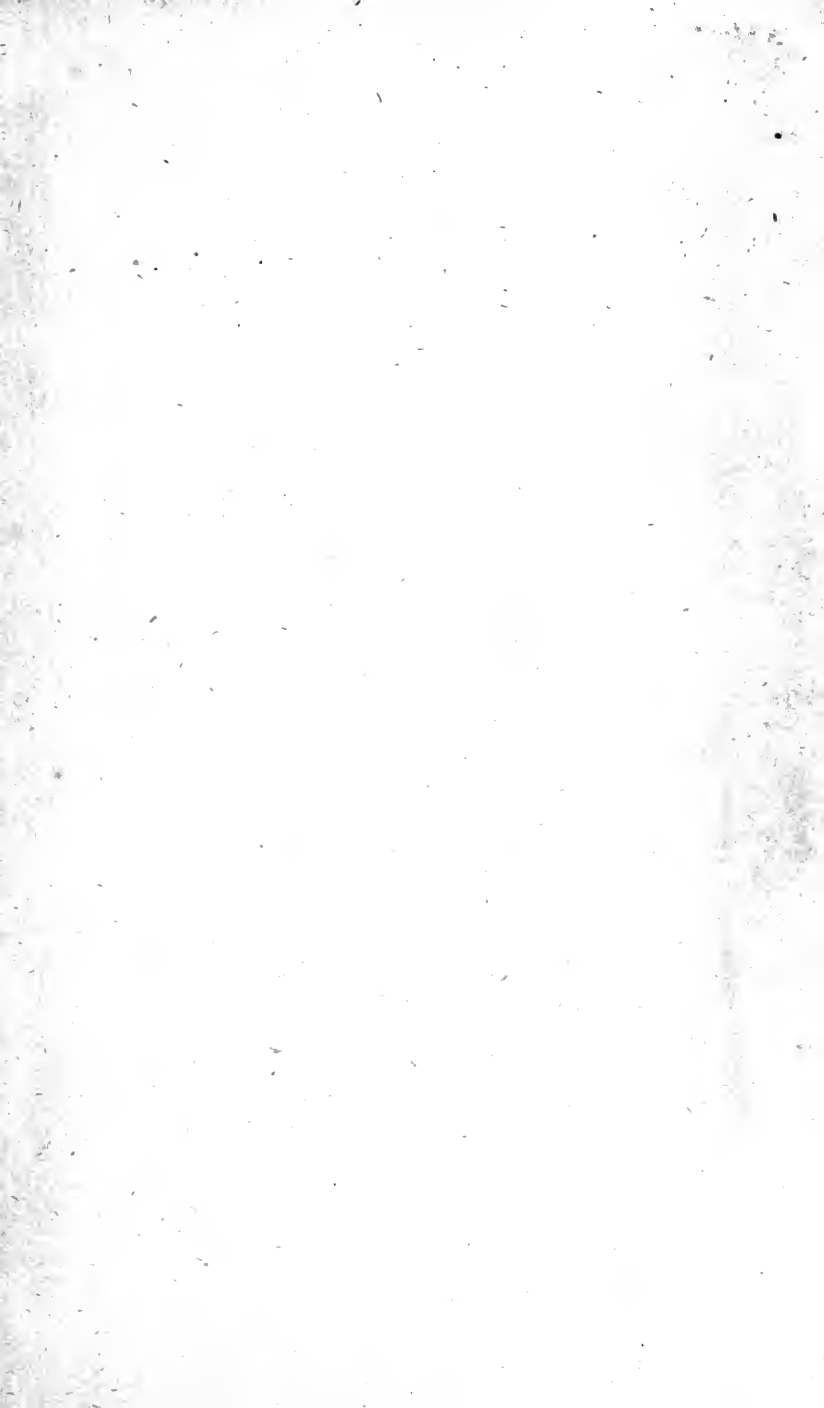
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